

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHJR 4205

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 24, 2006

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to provide for a simple majority of voters voting to authorize a school levy.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Schual-Berke, Haigh, Jarrett, Quall, Tom, Hunter, Hunt, Fromhold, Chase, Appleton, Darneille, Williams, Clibborn, McDermott, Simpson, P. Sullivan, Dickerson, O'Brien, Wood, Sells, Roberts, Green, Conway, Hudgins, Kirby, Kenney, McIntire, Dunshee, Hasegawa, Linville, Santos, Kagi, Ormsby, Lantz, Moeller and Blake).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/13/06, 83-15.

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/24/06 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Berkey, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller and Shin.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: The Washington State Constitution gives school districts the power to levy additional taxes and assume debt upon voter approval.

Excess Property Tax Levies: There are two methods for authorizing excess property taxes for school districts. The first method requires a 40 percent voter turnout; the other does not. In the first method, a levy is approved if at least 60 percent of those voting in a school district election vote "yes" and the number of voters who turn out exceeds 40 percent of the voters who participated in the district's last general election. In the second method, a levy is approved if the number of "yes" votes is at least equal to 60 percent of the 40 percent of the number of voters who voted in the district's last general election.

General Obligation Bonds: A school district may issue general obligation bonds for capital purposes in excess of set limits only if at least 60 percent of those voting in a district election vote "yes" and the number of voters who turn out equals or exceeds 40 percent of the number of voters who participated in the district's last general election.

Incurring Debt: Under the Constitution, a school district may incur debt up to 5 percent of the value of the taxable property in the district if the proposition is approved by 60 percent of the votes cast in an election for that purpose. A school district may incur debt for capital outlays up to 10 percent of the value of the taxable property in the district if the proposition is approved by 60 percent of the votes cast in an election for that purpose.

To amend the Constitution, a bill must be passed by a two-thirds majority of both houses of the Legislature and approved by a majority of the people.

Summary of Bill: An amendment to the Washington State Constitution is proposed to provide for a simple majority of voters to authorize excess capital, maintenance and operation, and transportation levies for school districts. The amendment removes the 40 percent election validation requirement for levy elections.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.